

DOING THEATRE IN MONTREAL



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QUEBEC
DRAMA
FEDERATION
D'ART
DRAMATIQUE
DU QUÉBEC

THE QDF GUIDE
FOR EMERGING ARTISTS

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Introduction

Conventional wisdom suggests that the Montreal English theatre community shouldn't even exist. But why be conventional?

Let's look at the numbers. The anglophone community in Québec, centered mostly around Montreal, is estimated to be about 800 000 people out of a total of 4.2 million. According to polls there are about 500 full-time English actors working here. That means that 1 out of every 1600 English Quebecers is an actor. Compare this with the Francophone numbers: 2000 actors out of the remaining 3.6 million: about one out of every 1800 Francophones participates in theatre. Granted, some actors are bilingual and play on both sides of the language fence, but the fact that the proportions are so similar, given the much smaller size of the English community, is interesting by itself.

Many theories about the incredible vigor of the Montreal scene have been put forth. Some point to the reflex action of a (literal) island of minority culture in the middle of another; 'Quanglos' are distinct from the Rest Of Canada in their close guarding of ties to European and UK theatre and culture, versus the strong American cultural currents felt elsewhere. Some put it down to the city's friendly atmosphere, late nights, and cheap rents compared to other Canadian cities. Many rightfully point to the energizing vitality of the Fringe Festival, the Just For Laughs comedy bacchanal, and the dozens of smaller film, video and theatre showcases put on by various organizations. These often provide a yearly shot in the arm of new ideas and inspiration, as well as showcasing local talent.

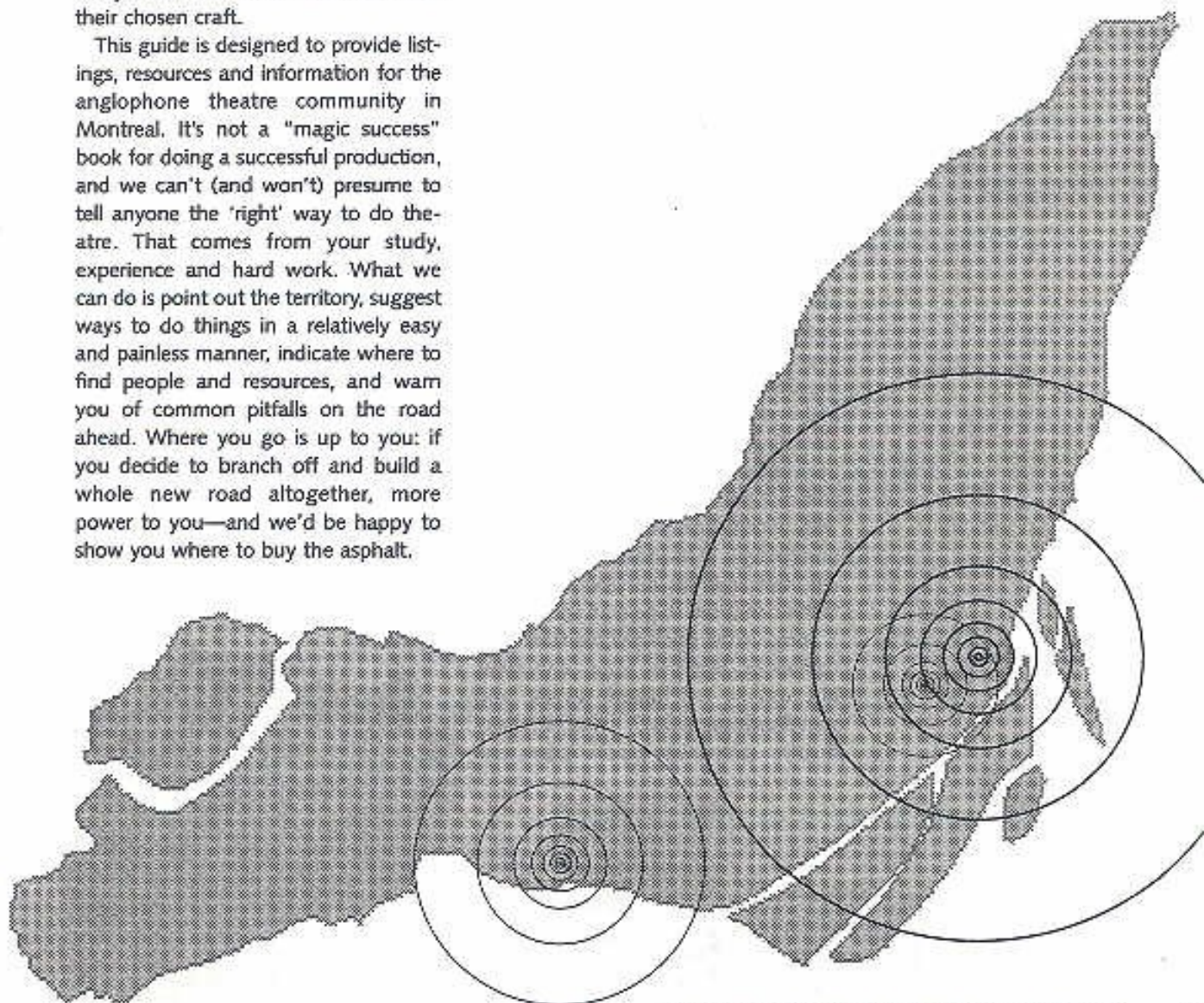
You meet a lot of out-of-towners in Montreal theatre. Our city is like a magnet for people who want to reinvent themselves, who come from practically everywhere, lured by the romance of the city, the laid-back lifestyle, the bubbling scene; the New York punk brashness combined with San Francisco ravester hipness and Parisian café-chic. They come for the five excellent drama schools—Dawson College, John Abbott College, Concordia University, McGill University and the National Theatre School. These schools bring together and concentrate the young drama community into a 'critical mass' of talent, constantly meeting, working together and exchanging ideas. It goes a long way towards explaining the relative youth of most English actors in Montreal: I would estimate that the majority are under 35 years old. This can be a double-edged sword, as you find a theatre community with a lot of enthusiasm but less experience, constantly having to 'rebuild' itself as out-of-province graduates return home or natives go elsewhere to find Fame. Or get a steady day job.

The distinction between amateur and professional theatre here is often blurred. It's often a labor of love for the enthusiasts; often a money-losing proposition to the unwary and unprepared. There are dozens of successful 'amateur' companies that put on several shows on shoestring budgets year-round all over the city, many in non-traditional venues; and a handful of established, well-publicized, financially secure companies that are based at regular locations and specialize in certain kinds of performances. Often, you'll find people going back and forth from

Our city is like a magnet for people who want to reinvent themselves.

the 'amateur' to the 'professional' side. One has to wonder, what does 'professional' mean in a city like Montreal? What is success? Does it mean an income based exclusively on theatre? (Nice work if you can get it.) Is it having an ACTRA card and doing TV commercials? Is it doing nonprofit 'message' theatre? Having a company that stays profitable? Everyone comes to the Montreal scene looking for something; they may not find it here, but they certainly learn a lot about themselves and their chosen craft.

This guide is designed to provide listings, resources and information for the anglophone theatre community in Montreal. It's not a "magic success" book for doing a successful production, and we can't (and won't) presume to tell anyone the 'right' way to do theatre. That comes from your study, experience and hard work. What we can do is point out the territory, suggest ways to do things in a relatively easy and painless manner, indicate where to find people and resources, and warn you of common pitfalls on the road ahead. Where you go is up to you: if you decide to branch off and build a whole new road altogether, more power to you—and we'd be happy to show you where to buy the asphalt.



The Montreal Scene

Our city has a sparkling array of theatre companies that produce some of the most experimental and artistically respected work in North America. The groups are divided along linguistic lines between the larger, well-established companies of the francophone milieu and the many smaller anglophone ones.

The French-language organizations generally seem to have their act together (pardon the pun), with good funding and a regular audience base, as well as several well-equipped theatres and festivals. There are also several CEGEPS and universities producing professionals for the Francophone theatre scene.

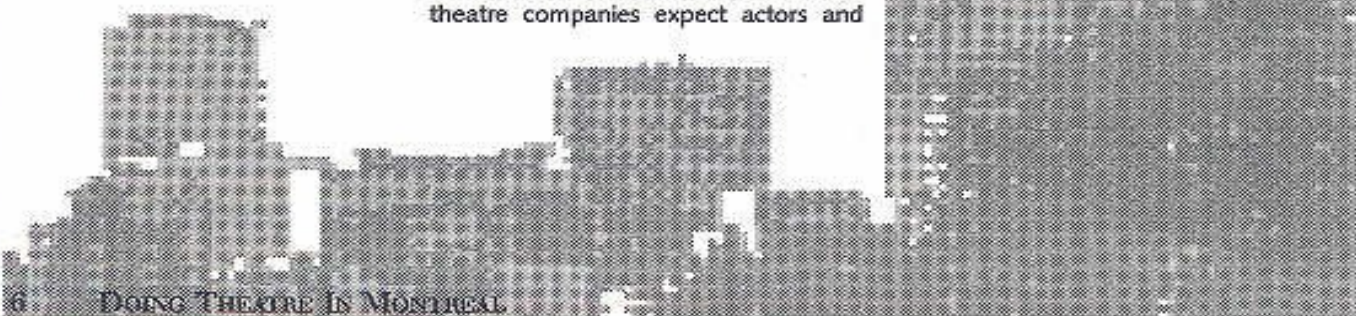
The English-language theatre scene is certainly far more unusual. There are two CEGEPS, two universities and the National Theatre School that produce plenty of actors, designers, directors and technicians. There is really only one large, permanent professional theatre, the Centaur. The Centaur's audience is mainly composed of people 35 and up, attracting them with a repertoire of new mainstream drama and popular works. Centaur also co-produces works with outside companies. Centaur pays union wages to its professional employees (such as actors, designers, directors, technicians, and stage managers).

Some of the small and medium sized companies also pay actors and crew, but usually not union wages, and sometimes not enough to live on; many theatre companies expect actors and

others to work for free, for the experience or on a 'professional internship' basis that can lead to paid work later on.

As a rule of thumb, the Centaur and the established suburban theatre companies, like the Lakeshore Players, are patronized by people from the age of 35 and over nearly exclusively, often by senior citizens and families who buy season tickets. Conversely, students and the young, hip crowd will go to riskier, cheaper shows by newer companies.

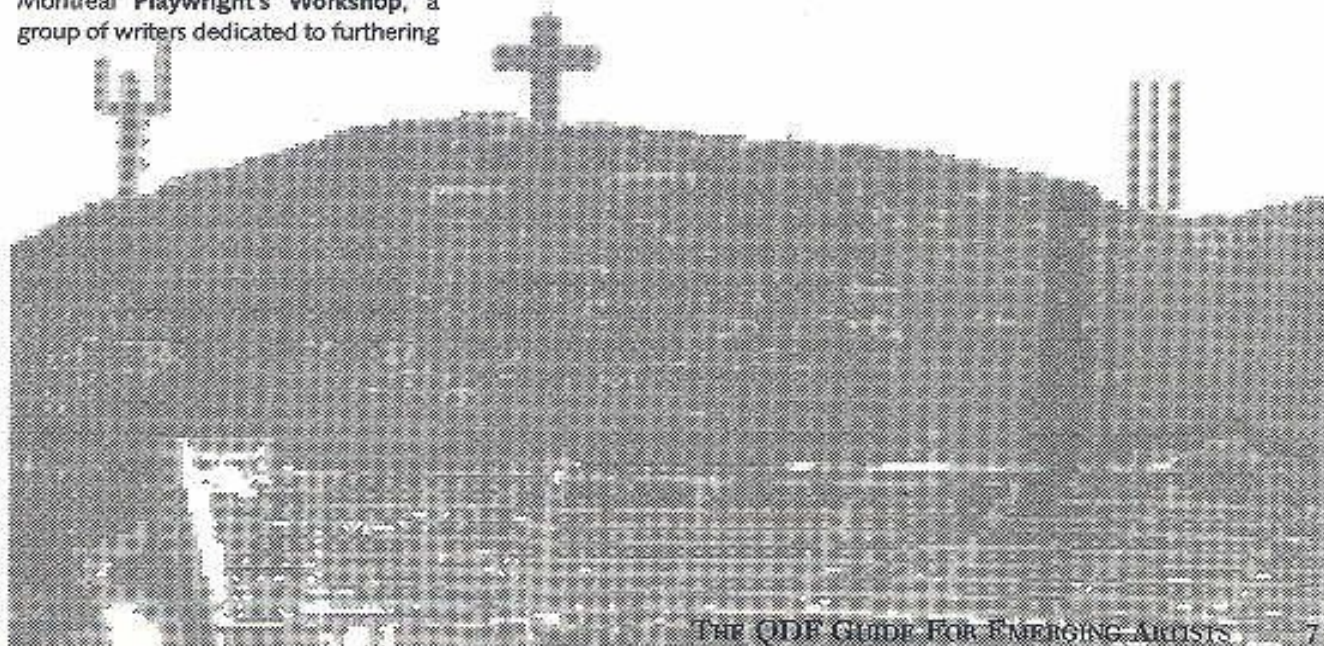
There are some important English-language theatre institutions in Montreal, that all companies should be aware and make use of. First among them is the **Québec Drama Federation (QDF)**, the intelligence headquarters for the English-language theatre community. Some of the services they offer for a small annual fee include free advertising of your play in their newsletter, free advice concerning grants and running a company, and an impressive database that can put you in contact with actors, other companies, resources, different levels of government, and anyone who is important to the theatre community. They also have a small space to rent out for rehearsal or performance. (See the appendix for contact names and telephone numbers.)



Secondly there's the **Montreal Fringe Festival**. This event, taking place every year from mid-to-late June is a gathering of small companies wanting to showcase their latest endeavours. The Fringe Festival brings over fifty plays into several theatre spaces, many non-traditional, for a period usually between one and two weeks. It's a great place to meet other artists from Montreal, across Canada, and from other countries. It's also a chance to see other work and show yours to people who can help you in the future. A lot of theatre-goers and theatre students attend plays at the Fringe, and you can sometimes make or break your reputation by showcasing a good play here. There are a limited number of performance times and spaces available, usually on a first-come, first-served, pay-to-play basis. At the time of this writing the organizers of the Montreal Fringe are debating whether to continue it, but more information can be obtained by calling 849-FEST. Thirdly, there's the **Montreal Playwright's Workshop**, a group of writers dedicated to furthering

Canadian plays. This is an invaluable resource if you want to have original work critiqued and possibly workshopped by professionals. They also have a space to hold readings and showcase new works.

It's been said that living in English Montreal is like being in a small town hidden inside a big city. If you hang around long enough, you'll see the same faces and names crop up in productions, and you'll find out the One Degree of Separation rule—everyone knows everyone else. And that small-town friendliness carries over; there seems to be a mutual bond of cooperation among companies. For the most part, people are ready and willing to help others who need to borrow expertise, equipment or just get advice. The English-language theatre scene is not competitive in a cut-throat Broadway sense; it's very cooperative. So don't hesitate to ask for advice—everyone has to start somewhere.



Where to Start

The Step-By-Step Guide to Doing a Play

1) A play is chosen, often by the Artistic Director, that fits the company's means.

2) The administration plans out the show.

- Performance spaces and dates are decided upon.
- A financing plan is created.
- Performance rights are acquired (if needed).

3) A director is chosen in accordance with the company's mandate. It could be one of the members working in the core of the company, or someone from outside.

4) Cast and crew are chosen to work on the play based on your company policy. Usually the director chooses the actors. Other people you will probably need include: a stage manager, technicians, set designers, a graphic designer for the programmes and posters, front of house (FOH) staff, and possibly office help as well (such as programme advertising solicitors, fundraisers, publicity crew, etc.). You may also have any other positions you feel are necessary for the play, possibly including playwrights, artists, assistants, etc.

5) Deadlines are set by the administration (usually the province of the Production Manager).

- Finance deadlines for fundraising, before production begins.

• Design & Pre-Production deadlines: Set, Props, Costume, Sound, Lighting. This is the planning stage where the look and feel of the show is hammered out.

• Production/Construction deadlines for Set, Props, Costume, Sound, Lighting and Publicity materials. All

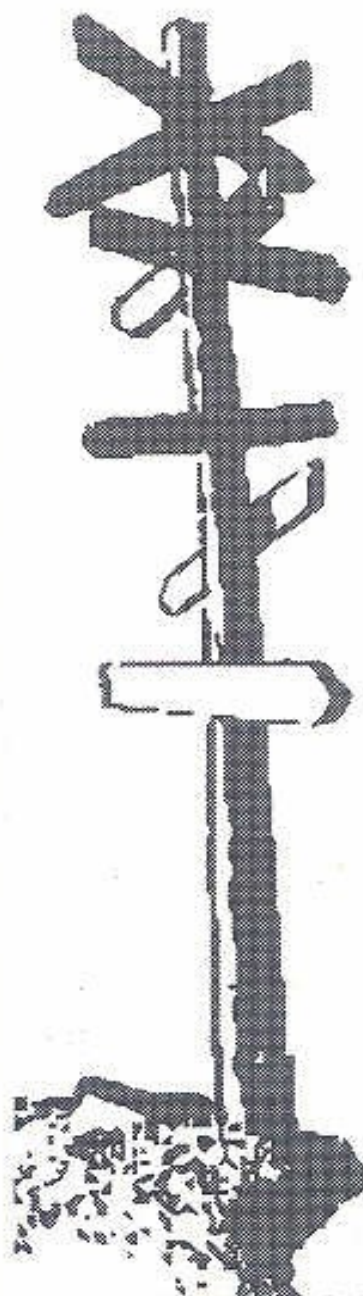
stage materials and cues are ready for the next step, which is the...

• **Technical Rehearsal:** A series of dry run-throughs to get timing, lines, lighting, music and sound cues together and solve any problems arising from them.

• **Dress Rehearsal:** basically the rehearsal of the show, complete as the audience will see it, before the actual Performance. Everyone is made aware of these deadlines.

6) A budget is worked out by the administration. It includes:

- Performance Rights, paid to the agency representing the author.
- Space Rental
- Scripts—purchase or reproduction of copies
- Design & Pre-Production Costs (i.e. paints, pens, paper, fabric, set models, etc.)
- Administrative Costs (organizational materials & tools, if any)
- Set Costs (construction materials, tools, & special items)
- Prop Costs
- Sound & Lighting Costs: rental of equipment, or, if you foresee its reuse, purchase: As well, are your people going to operate the equipment themselves or will you hire someone to do it?
- Costume Costs: rental, purchase or creation. Also keep in mind that your costumer should be on hand at the performances for any quick repairs and alterations if necessary.
- FOH costs:
 - Programs
 - Tickets
 - Concessions
 - Cash Float for Till
 - Box Office
- Transportation Costs



- Publicity Costs: Posters, Faxes, Mail, Phone Calls, Etc.
- Petty Cash
- Cast Party

7) The budget is approved, usually by the Treasurer and the executive.

8) The Production Manager allots money as needed, based on the company policy.

9) Work begins: Rehearsals begin, construction starts.

10) All deadlines are met.

11) The show opens and completes its run.

12) All revenues are put into the bank, after accounts are audited, people are paid, reimbursed, etc.

13) After the show all files are given to the administration. They often include: FOH reports, Production Manager's files, Stage Manager's files, and Publicity. The files are checked and verified, then are stored for future use. The show is evaluated by the administration.

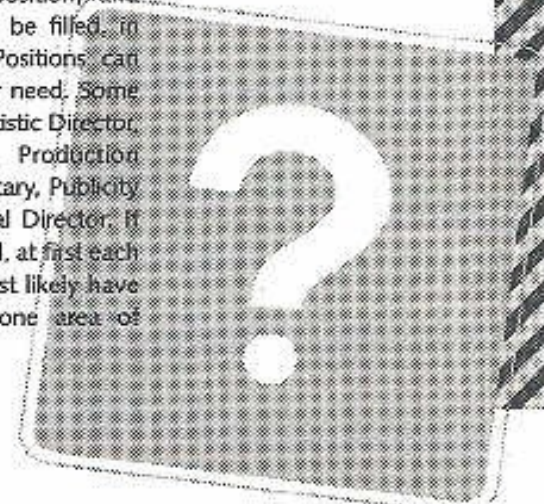
13) Sleep, then start all over again....

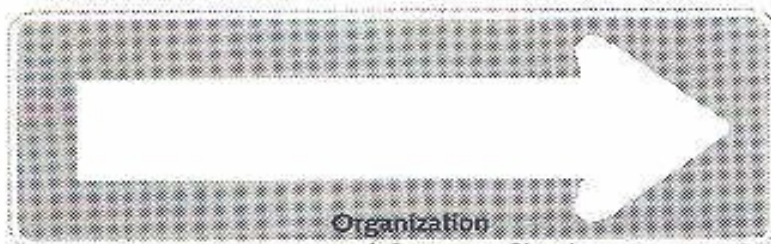
The first thing that is needed to start a company is vision. You must ask "What is the purpose of our company? What is our mandate?"

With this important foundation, you must sit down and do some planning and paperwork. It's a good idea at this point to sit down with the people you'd like to have in your company's core, and hammer out a set of bylaws, or a Constitution. A Constitution is a set of goals your company hopes to achieve. Some common mandates include awareness-raising about an issue, performing the works of a specific author, creating original work, doing quality

theatre, bringing theatre to the masses, teaching theatre skills and—knock on wood—making enough money to live on. A goal can be anything you want the company to accomplish, no matter how unusual. A Constitution should also outline how your company will be governed and organized, and should include a set of guidelines and regulations that will be followed by all members.

A theatre company is a community—there are laws which people must agree to follow to make everything run smoothly. The rules you set up for your company should be fair and used to make sure there is minimal conflict and maximum efficiency. They should answer questions like how plays will be selected, who has the final say in decision making, who decides on directors and designers (and how), who is in charge of fundraising, whether or not votes will take place in what situations, who is eligible to vote, how it will work, etc. The Constitution should cover all bases; there will be less potential for trouble because people have agreed guidelines to follow. The Constitution will also outline what positions there will be in the core of your company, the responsibilities of each position, and how the positions are to be filled, in case somebody leaves. Positions can include anything you may need. Some common positions are: Artistic Director, Administrative Director, Production Manager, Treasurer, Secretary, Publicity Coordinator, and Technical Director. If your company is very small, at first each founding member will most likely have to take on more than one area of responsibility.







Organization and Company Structure


There are many ways to govern your theatre company. It's important to decide what is the best structure for your needs. The most common models of organizing a small-to-medium sized theatre company in Montreal are as follows:


- **The Artistic Directorship.** Under this 'benevolent dictator' system, one person is running the company—deciding on plays, making decisions, selecting casts and crews, and often directing shows themselves. Many small theatre companies operate using this government system, and eventually grow into a non-profit organization or corporation.

 **Advantages:** The Artistic Director is in charge of everything, so this limits areas of conflict and keeps the lines of hierarchy defined. It's easy to keep a unified artistic vision and company goals are easily established and followed. However, this doesn't necessarily mean the opinion of an AD is written in stone; growth can, and often should come from creative challenges to one leader's ideas, and these should be welcome.


 **Disadvantages:** The Artistic Director must have a lot of genius, energy, time, and charisma. Ultimately, the AD becomes responsible for overseeing everything in a production, and if the AD can't learn to delegate authority, it will lead to friction and mistrust, as it can seem like the AD feels the need to do everyone's job better than they can. Under this system, it's more difficult to get funding and grants.


- **The Co-Directorship.** This is the same idea as the Artistic Director, except there are two or more leaders. Sometimes the directors divide up responsibility, such as Artistic Director, Administrative Director, Technical Director, etc.

 **Advantages:** The responsibilities are more evenly distributed.

 **Disadvantages:** Often directors will disagree on what is best for the company and the process will become gridlocked. Tendencies towards taking sides and forming alliances are common to this form of government. Again, areas of responsibility and boundaries for decision making must be clearly and strictly laid out and agreed upon at the start to avoid time-and-energy-consuming conflicts.


- **The Collective.** A collective government consists of a group of people who make all of the decisions by the democratic process. Often they will also be involved in the writing of collective works. There is no direct leader in the collective, but often a facilitator who will field questions and chair meetings; this can be a rotating position.


 **Advantages:** This system is good for a special interest group that is united by a common theme because it puts many minds together. It's also good because it puts many people in charge, so the work load can be evenly distributed, and everyone feels equally involved. A good collective instills a sense of pride and hence dedication in its members.

 **Disadvantages:** The biggest problem with collectives is that there is no clear leader and it's very

easy for personalities and ideas to conflict. All decisions, even minor ones, *must* be voted on which requires a great deal of patience and acceptance. Collectives often fall apart for these reasons. It's also difficult to receive funding and grants.


• **The Non-Profit Organization.** A Non-Profit Organization (NPO) is perhaps the most common form of government for medium-sized theatre companies in Montreal. It consists of a Board of Directors and several administrative positions, such as Artistic Director, Administrative Director, and Publicist. While the company is officially non-profit, artists and administrators are getting a decent salary. "Non-profit" really means that elected administrators cannot personally benefit from profits and would not share in them as opposed to having shares in a private corporation.


 **Advantages:** Governments tend to favor NPOs over all other types of company when giving out grants. The government will fund these companies if they have a well-organized administration, a good board of directors, and a sensible mandate. NPOs are also eligible for tax-deductible donations from corporate sponsors. With this money, it's possible to pay your staff and have growth.

 **Disadvantages:** You may have to sacrifice your art in order to get the funding that you need. If you are not well-organized, this type of company will fail quickly; NPOs need to have precise accounts, payrolls, etc. The company that receives grants must report to the govern-

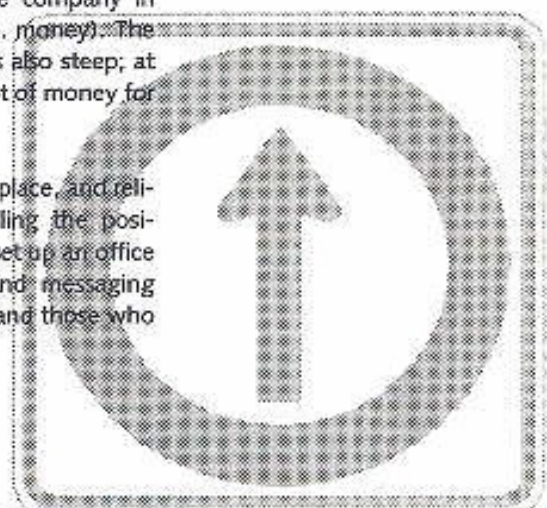
ment every fiscal year. Excellent administrators are needed. The finances of NPOs are also open to public scrutiny if the company seeks and receives public funding.

• **The Corporation.** This is both the most efficient and the most complex type of theatre government. It may seem confusing at first to examine the potential tax benefits and the administration, but can become a sound investment after a few successful productions.

 **Advantages:** A corporation can maintain its profits, so it can have investors that will buy shares of the company. If the company profits, so do the investors. The corporation also has limited liability, which means if the company folds, you do not. Another advantage is low corporate taxes. As well, the fact that you can defer profits means that you can keep them in the company without paying taxes until dividends are paid out.

 **Disadvantages:** All corporations must report to the government for each fiscal year end. There are also taxes on capital (how much you've invested in the company in the form of capital, i.e. money). The cost of incorporating is also steep; at around \$1,000 it's a lot of money for a small company.

With this organization in place, and reliable qualified people filling the positions, it's a good idea to set up an office as a reliable meeting and messaging point for your members and those who wish to contact you.





The Office

It's easy to be impressed by the fact that a theatre company might have its own 'space' with carpets, air-conditioning and a fancy nameplate on the door. However, it's a useful exercise in perspective to keep in mind that for over a decade, celebrated British theatre and film director Kenneth Branagh ran one of London's most successful independent companies out of his bedroom!

There *does* come a point where cramming a dozen people into your closet becomes prohibitive, but please consider these points before taking on some real estate.

Your office is the brain of your theatre company. Spare no expense in making it well-organized and well-staffed. Make sure it's comfortable and an enjoyable place to work in—and make sure you will be able to afford the rent for a while. Good lighting, an ample supply of tea and coffee, nice furniture and equipment are all excellent ideas, but all you really need, to begin, is a permanent address or Post Office box, a telephone number and an answering machine: very few people other than yourselves will visit the office.

The Role of the Office

- To create and maintain a database of all information your company needs: Contact names and addresses of actors, directors, designers, other companies, etc.
- To deal with public relations. Telephone tag is, unfortunately, par for the course, so make it easy on yourself: Besides PR and publicity this really requires having an answering machine and/or a fax so that you can be got

hold of.

- To deal with finance for the company.
- To keep detailed and precise accounts.
- To handle publicity.
- To schedule company meetings.
- To maintain minutes of meetings.
- To keep all company members up to date.
- To deal with administrative aspects of a show, such as ticket sales, programme advertising, printing, distribution of posters, etc.
- Dealing with the payroll.
- Paying taxes, if any.

Useful Skills for Office Personnel

- Bilingualism—English and French. This is Québec, after all.
- Excellent organizational skills.
- Computer skills
- Accounting skills
- Excellent communication skills, including a good, confident telephone manner.

Tools that an Office should Always Include

- A mail box or PO box.
- A telephone and possibly even a fax machine or fax modem. An answering machine is a must for the office of any theatre company.
- A chequing account at the bank; the Production Manager will be writing lots of these.
- A database (ideally, a computer-based one) This should include all of your resources, information, and files. If you rely on computers to manage priceless information like addresses, accounts and the like, don't wait for disaster to

strike—make regular (weekly or monthly) backups of all data, print hard copies if possible, and store both of these in a secure off-site location. If, heaven forbid, your office should burn down, it makes no sense to keep the backups in the same place.

- A photocopier, if at all possible, for copying scripts, letters, records etc. If you don't use a computer, make copies of all important files and documents and, as above, store them in a secure place.

- Company letterhead stationery—Image counts for a lot when you go a-courting for performance spaces and MONEY.

- A filing cabinet for hard copies of anything on computer, extra diskettes, and production files.

- An ample supply of office paraphernalia—paper, pens, staples, paper clips, stamps, Post-it notes, etc.

- At least one copy each of the White Pages, the Yellow Pages, the Postal Codes Directory, a Montreal street atlas, Actor's Equity directories.

- A dry-erase plastic calendar for marking deadlines, appointments and timetables. If you really want to get organized, invest in a good day planner or, for the computerized, scheduling software to plan timetables and remind you of meetings and such.

Other Useful Items

- A library of books covering all applicable theatre and business subjects that can help the theatre company.

- A script library.

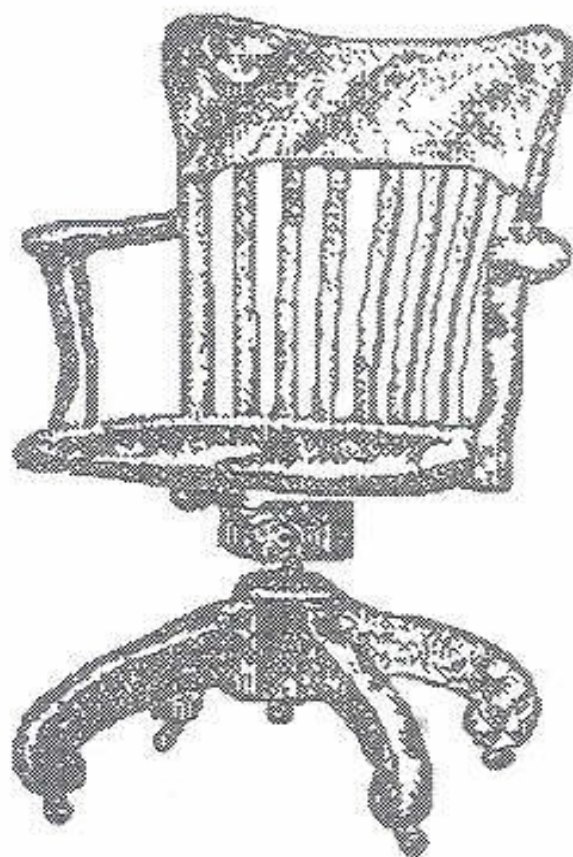
- A coffee pot, tea kettle, and an ample supply of each substance.

- A microwave and fridge.

- A dry-erase whiteboard and/or easel for sketching design ideas, urgent messages etc.

- Plan to keep a scrapbook of photos, posters, and any printed reviews of your plays; it can be a useful tool in maintaining a company history and image.

All that organization is simply there to corral all your information in one place and, in the end, save you hours of precious time. The next step, before you can start a production, is to get that other precious resource—cash!



Money, And How To Get It



Your company's ability to mount a serious production depends on skillful financial management, whether it be getting the most out of a \$10 props budget to figuring out tax claims for your last mega-musical. Nothing can depress creativity and motivation more than knowing the entire troupe will be actually poorer after a performance than before! Plan ahead, be realistic, ask advisors and other professionals for guidance and consider the following information.

The more organized **small companies** take advantage of government-funded employment programs, receive small projects grants and sometimes sponsorship. They usually play small venues such as high school studios and auditoriums, the QDF, Geordie, various ad hoc spaces, and the Fringe Festival. In a small production, you might make some profit past the break-even point: if planned correctly, even a one-off production can be profitable if costs are kept low, even at \$2 ticket prices.

Medium-sized companies, that have the money to mount more elaborate plays, usually have from 2-4 people on the payroll in the administration, and also pay their directors, actors, designers, and technicians. Some can even afford union wages. Of these few well-administrated companies (examples are Geordie, Youtheatre, Black Theatre Workshop, Theatre 1774, and Repercussion), most of them are well-established **non-profit organizations** (except Repercussion which is a Corporation), each with a board of directors, an artistic director and an administrative director. Because of their NPO status and solid financial records, they receive on average somewhere in

the range of 50-60 percent of their annual operating budget from government grants. With this money they are able to play in better venues, afford decent publicity and hence raise the other half of their budget from ticket sales as well. With good administration it's also more common to see high levels of investment or sponsorship.

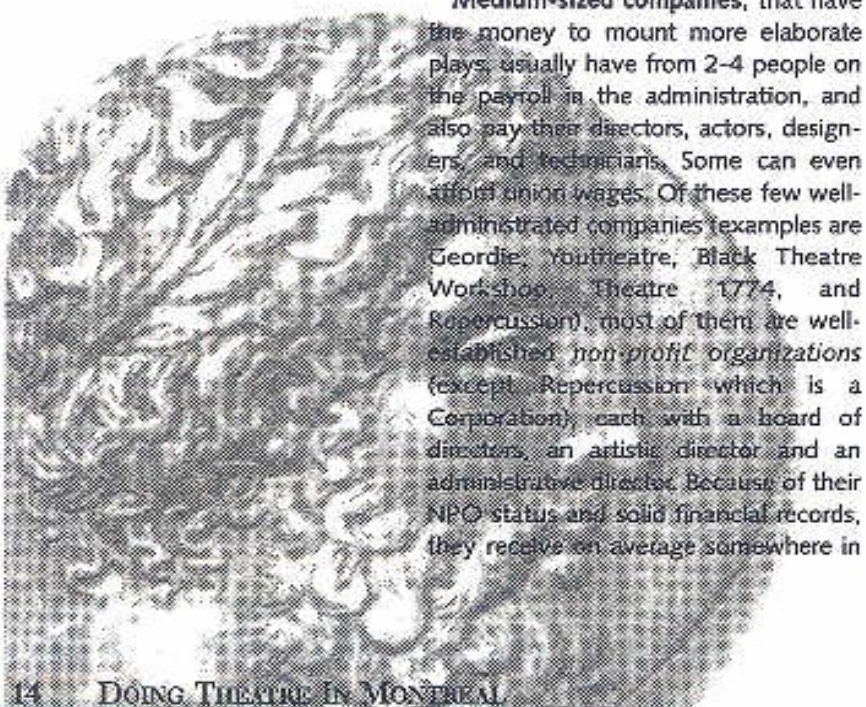
Medium-sized companies all have one thing in common: Their mandate is very clear and is of potential interest to the government. Repercussion does Shakespeare-in-the-Park and in schools, Youtheatre and Geordie do Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA), 1774 has a bilingual mandate and Black Theatre Workshop supports visible minority artists. All of these 'special interest group' mandates dovetail well with progressive government agendas, and thus have a stronger claim to public funds. Various other companies have complained that "special interest" theatre gets a lion's share of the money because the government is afraid of the political consequences of cutting their funding.

There are many ways to get money for your company. You will need as much as you can get, so be sure to focus a lot of energy on acquiring dollars. Here are some typical ways of getting cash:

Grants

There are three levels of government that may give you some money; federal, provincial, and municipal.

The Canada Council is the federal funding agency. To find out about eligibility requirements, write to them at:



3050 Albert St., P.O. Box 1047,
Ottawa, K1P 2N5
Or call toll-free 1-800-263-5588.

CALQ (the Conseil des Arts et des
Lettres du Québec) controls provin-
cial funding. You can reach them at:
3450 St. Urbain, Montreal, H2X 2N5
(514) 864-3352.

CACUM (the Conseil des Arts de la
Communauté Urbaine de Montreal)
is in charge of funding for Montreal.
Contact them at:
500 Place D'Armes, 15th floor, H2Y
2W2. (514) 280-3580.

Grant applications are often very
complicated, and you have to meet
very specific standards to get any
money. If you, like most of us, spent
Economics class writing the definitive
play about Angry Youth (man), you're
in luck. Part of the QDF's job is to help
with grant applications. They can tell
you about a whole assortment of gov-
ernmental, corporate and private grants
that you can apply for, and can even
suggest which ones you are more or
less likely to get.

Sponsorship

Certain companies and organizations
will give you services, materials, and
even money—for free—if you ask for
it and they believe in your production.
In exchange for the money most com-
panies expect that you advertise them
on your poster and in your program,
hang the company banner in the lobby,
or give them complimentary tickets for
their employees. Other organizations
may sponsor you if you are doing a play
that furthers their cause. For example,

if your production is a Canadian pre-
mière of the work of an Irish play-
wright, the St. Patrick's Society may
sponsor you.

When meeting with potential spon-
sors, make sure you are well-dressed
and organized with printed mandates,
budgets, business proposals, and a
clear presentation.

Sponsorship can also take the form of
goods and services, sometimes free,
sometimes supplied at cost. This can be
a lifesaver and help you squeeze extra
things out of a limited budget.

Fundraising

Fundraising includes anything that
your company does that will raise
money, usually in the form of an event
that people pay for. Some examples
include: a gala performance, a car
wash, a bake sale, a garage sale, a ben-
efit concert. It's necessary to advertise
fundraisers—you have to spend money
to make money, you know?

Investment

Investment can come from people in
your company, private investors, or
banks. It involves a loan of money in
exchange for interest. Investors (or,
technically speaking, the Producers)
want to see at least a reasonable return
on their investment, and certainly don't
want to lose money, so they may be
wary of backing, say, an unproven, new
work by an unknown author, but will
gladly back a proven crowd-pleaser.
(And, sometimes, you can't even count
on Shakespeare—Ed.) Quite often the
main investor will be someone in the
company (the one with the day job)
who decides to put up the money: a
good majority of plays are self-financed





this way. Most "professional" Producers in Montreal that put up money for shows, are not professional theatre people. They might be genuinely interested people with a bit of money to satisfy an artistic bent or bent people with money who need an artistic tax write-off. Choose your bedfellows carefully.

Sales & Merchandising

Sales can include: ticket sales, selling advertising space in your program, selling old props, costumes or other assets, having a concessions stand, selling refreshments, T-shirts, signed posters and/or other paraphernalia. The cost of mounting a moderately elaborate play can run high, and if you tour, it goes higher. Like in the rock world, merchandising stabilizes your bottom line.

Now that you've got money, serious pre-production can begin.

We're assuming that you've made some connections and have a capable production team together. Looks like it's time for...

Promotion and Publicity

When doing publicity, there are a number of important steps to take. First of all, publicity campaigns should begin at least two or three weeks before your show opens. Press releases should be prepared describing the show and the dates. Get a good writer to write these. Editors read lots of them, so make sure it's interesting, has a good 'hook line' and gets their attention. Then mail or fax the press releases to your newspapers of choice, addressed to the Arts Editor. You should also reserve complimentary tickets for reviewers and leave a contact number for this. If they have not contacted you after a few days, call them to check up. Kindly remind them, and invite them to your show. Sometimes you may have to be aggressive; get used to a lot of telephone tag. Once you've got a contact, insist on talking to that person. Try to get them to commit to at least publishing the dates, times, and phone number in their "What's Happening" section. A listing of newspapers and media outlets can be found in the appendix.

Note that you can also place paid advertisements into a newspaper, although this can be costly.

- Plan an extensive phone campaign to invite everyone that you know, and anyone on your phone list (which you should create). Some companies also have a mailing campaign.
- Posters should be created, printed, and put up about two weeks before the show opens. Postering downtown on empty buildings, boarded-up lots etc. is illegal, but also the best way to get the word out if you are discreet. Some places will let you put up posters legally, such as libraries, bookstores, shopping malls, restaurants, bars, laundro-

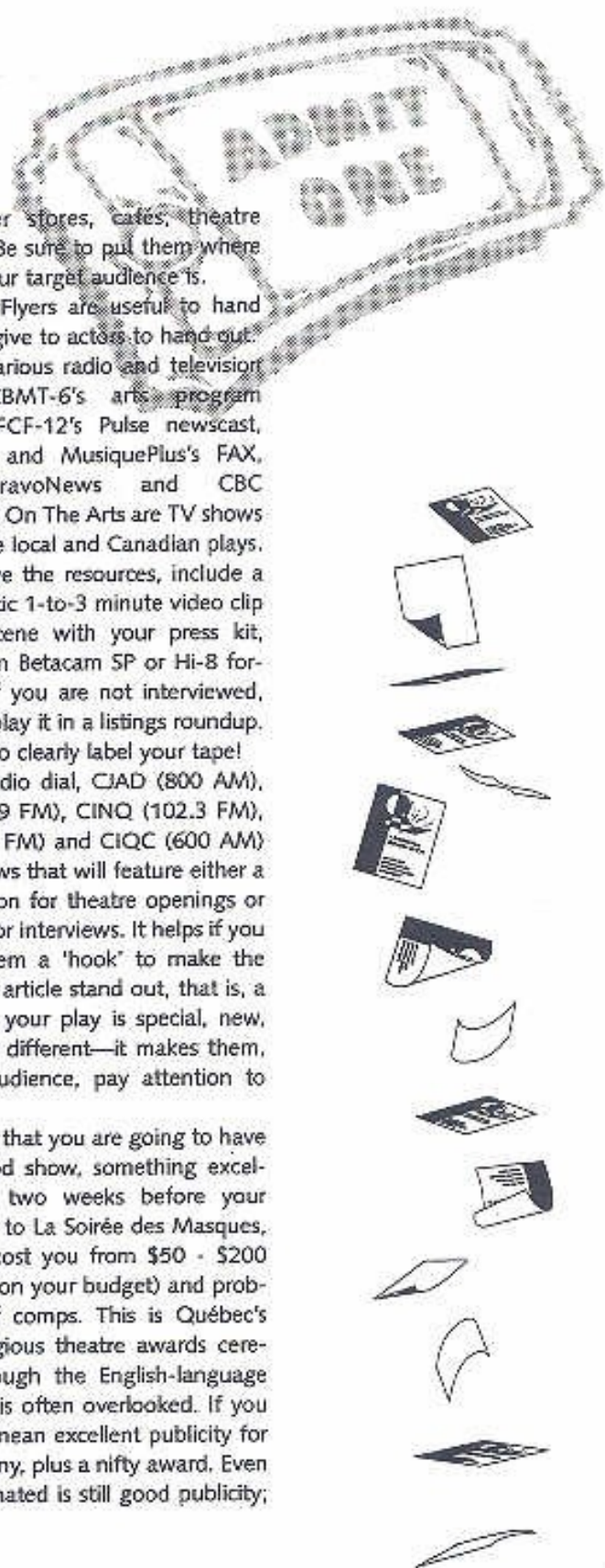
mats, corner stores, cafes, theatre spaces, etc. Be sure to put them where you think your target audience is.

- 1/4-page Flyers are useful to hand out, and to give to actors to hand out.
- Contact various radio and television stations. CBMT-6's arts program Citybeat, CFCF-12's Pulse newscast, MuchMusic and MusiquePlus's FAX, Bravo's BravoNews and CBC Newsworld's On The Arts are TV shows that promote local and Canadian plays.

If you have the resources, include a clear, dramatic 1-to-3 minute video clip of a key scene with your press kit, preferably on Betacam SP or Hi-8 format. Even if you are not interviewed, they might play it in a listings roundup. Remember to clearly label your tape!

On the radio dial, CJAD (800 AM), Mix 96 (95.9 FM), CINQ (102.3 FM), CKUT (90.3 FM) and CIQC (600 AM) all have shows that will feature either a listings section for theatre openings or talk shows for interviews. It helps if you can give them a 'hook' to make the interview or article stand out, that is, a reason why your play is special, new, unique, and different—it makes them, and their audience, pay attention to you.

- If you feel that you are going to have a really good show, something excellent, apply two weeks before your show opens to La Soirée des Masques, which will cost you from \$50 - \$200 (depending on your budget) and probably lots of comps. This is Québec's most prestigious theatre awards ceremony, although the English-language community is often overlooked. If you win, it will mean excellent publicity for your company, plus a nifty award. Even being nominated is still good publicity;





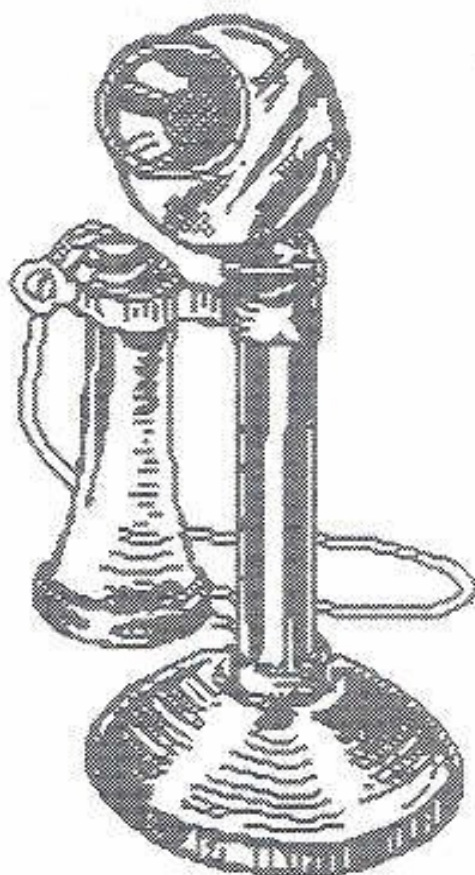
some influential theatre artists will get to know about you by attending or judging your show.

- There are often contests and awards for innovative scripts and theatre. Look out for these (often posted in theatre spaces, theatre departments, and at the QDF), especially if you are involved in writing your own work.

- Keep updated as to the goings-on in the theatre community. Read reviews and articles on local plays in the *Gazette*, the *Mirror*, and other publications. Try to get on the mailing list of local theatre companies, and put them on your mailing list.

- Be diplomatic. Maybe this seems obvious, but you'd be surprised at the amount of people out there who don't understand this. Always be reasonable and weigh all of your decisions. Don't be like the director who lost the respect of her company, and hence her reputation in the community, because she fired an excellent stage manager over a petty personality conflict. Don't be like the playwright who blows up at an actor after getting an honest critique of a work. Be reasonable, be consistent, be professional.

While you probably can't expect to be best buddies with everyone, you can at least be sure you don't make any enemies.



Printing

When it comes to printing up promotional materials, posters, press kits and the like, independent theatre people are in luck. Many photocopy-print shops have sprung up all over the city and it's easy to get affordable and reliable printing. It's a good idea to shop around and try to get a permanent printer who will give you a considerable discount in exchange for advertising them in your program.

Black and white printing is always the least expensive, and a good, simple, striking design can put it to good use. Sharp black-and-white laser copies are inexpensive for bulk materials such as letterheads, press kits and the like and even for handbills.

Full-color printing is the most expensive, often as much as four times as expensive as black and white. For small print runs of 100 or less, color photocopies are often a good solution, but are usually limited in size to 11x17" maximum. Most companies opt for the compromise solution of black plus one color (or duotone) printing. Every other company overuses red, in an attempt to stand out, so be creative!

When ordering printed materials, the volume-discount rule applies, so be prepared to pay more, paradoxically, if you order less than 100 copies of something.

When designing printed materials, remember that simple, clean, striking design wins out over ambitious, complicated and cluttered every time.

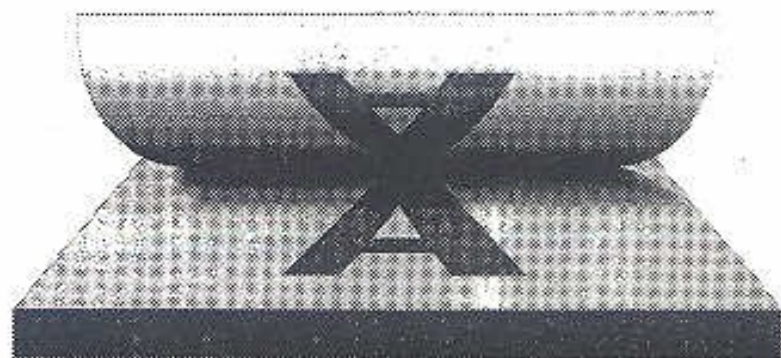
There are many books about practical graphic design: If you plan to make all of your promotional materials yourself, you owe it to yourself to take a look at them.

If you are designing for the first time

and need a place to start, it's always a good idea to go to the library and check out any books of old movie and theatre posters, the *Graphis Annual* design books, the *Album Cover Album* series of books and others. Trends in poster design come and go, and it's easy to see how styles have changed. Pick a graphic style that suits the tone of your production, and take it from there. Especially with posters, keep any typography big, bold, and simple. It's meant to be seen at a distance.

All you really need to communicate visually is the name of the play, some idea of its tone and content (by the design), the venue, dates and prices, and the name of your company. Unless you are all relatively famous, keep the egos in check and the names of principal actors, the director and the producer smaller than the title or off the poster altogether.

Professional printers usually require camera-ready artwork—which is to say any photographs or artwork that is more complex than a simple comic-strip line drawing (or line art) must be





not screened or converted to a pattern of halftone dots, like newspaper pictures. A printer will charge extra to do this, as well as any photo-enlarging or reducing to fit your layout.

If you are using a computer to design your printed materials, try to avoid using more than two or three typefaces; anything more looks cluttered and amateurish. As well, many programs offer fancy lettering effects like bold-face, drop shadows, outline letters, etc. Use them by all means, but use them sparingly and tastefully, and not all together at once.

If you print your layout yourself, try to use a good-quality laser printer for dark, sharp printing. Ink-jet output is close but can appear smudged. If you don't have access to a laser printer, don't worry, many modern print/photocopy shops are computerized, so it's simpler to just bring a disk with your files and print it out there. Ask whether they support your brand of computer and type of software.

Printers:

Alpha Graphics: 274-3333

4804 Park Avenue

Kwik-Kopy: 849-3739

2020 University

Copie Express

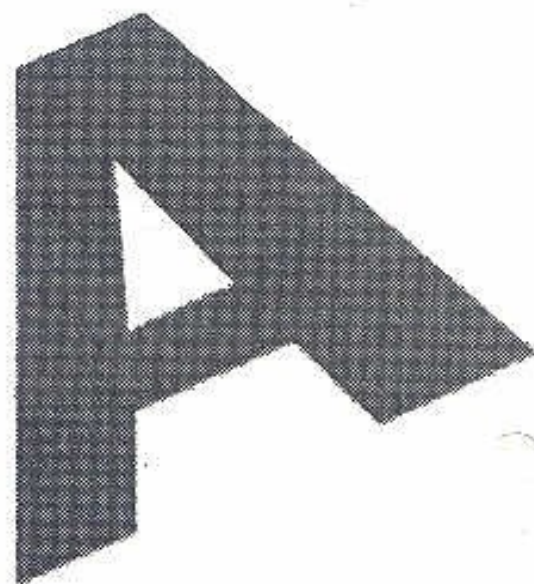
many downtown locations.

Copie Resources

St-Laurent Blvd above Pine.

Print Three: Eaton Centre

Ste-Catherine/McGill College Avenue
Métro McGill.



Scripts and Theatre Literature

You can find scripts and theatre literature in most book stores, but the selection tends to be limited and the prices high. Secondhand book stores are cheaper and often have a more interesting selection. University bookstores are also excellent places to look. The National Theatre School also has an excellent library, but you have to be a member (a \$50 fee). CEGEP and University libraries often have a wealth of books on acting, stage design, and other technical theatre topics.

Stage Bookstore: This boutique specializes in scripts and books dealing with performing arts subjects. Corner of Ste-Catherine & Chomedey near Atwater.

Theatrebooks: This Toronto store is considered by many as Canada's finest theatre book resource centre in Canada. You can order from them by calling: 1-800-361-3414.

If you need scripts in bulk they can usually be provided by the company you are dealing with for the rights to do the play.

Second-hand:

Livres Astro (Ste. Catherine/St-Mathieu) and **Cheap Thrills** (McCaulfe/Shebrooke) have a good variety of theatre literature.

Performance Rights

With copyright, you will have to pay a percentage or a fee to perform a play if you didn't write it yourself. It's only fair to pay playwrights their share, because a) It's their work, and b) You can be sued!

To find out about performance rights, look in the first or second page of the script you've acquired for the address to write to.

Over time, copyright expires and can no longer be renewed, and the work becomes public domain- and therefore free- but it's still a good idea to check first.

The two largest companies are:
Dramatist Play Service, Inc.: 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY, USA, 10016 (212) 683-8960

Samuel French, Inc.: 80 Richmond Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5C 1P1.

Auditions

As we've stated earlier on, the Montreal theatre community is rather cozy. The director you audition for one month will end up in the auditions for your play the next. You'll see the same actors show up to many different casting calls, and it's worth your time to get to know them; make contacts; share information and make notes on who you'd like to cast.

To get actors for your auditions, advertise. The two best places to do this are in the Auditions section of the Montreal *Mirror* and Montreal *Gazette's* classified ads. Since not everyone has time to read the paper don't limit yourself; cast your net as wide as possible. Go directly to the colleges, universities and theatre schools and put up audition notices. (Be sure to get them stamped first!)

At Concordia, you'll want to put them up in the Theatre and Communications Studies buildings (Loyola campus); at McGill, in the Arts West annex, the Leacock building and the Shatner Student Centre. At John Abbott, the best place is the Theatre department in the Casgrain building. The National Theatre School has an auditions board, and the QDF has an auditions listing in their monthly newsletter. Other than that, you might want to try the Stage bookstore, recently relocated to the corner of Ste. Catherine and Chomedey streets near Atwater, any or all good bookstores and cafes. Anywhere you know theatre people go.

When running an audition, you'll need an appropriate space. The Playwright's Workshop is one of the more commonly used ones for auditions. But there are plenty of 'reading

spaces around, like the QDF space, available during the daytime for a nominal fee.

When people call, set up a tentative schedule for auditions, but be prepared to keep times flexible. People often work during the day, they'll arrive either early or late, but never exactly on time. They might have to reschedule.

Be considerate of the actors! They're taking time out of their lives for you, so be nice to them. It's a good idea to maybe keep some cold drinks (or at least water) on hand on a hot day, or some coffee on a cold day (and it does get cold in Montreal!) Anything to keep your auditioners comfortable and at their best.

If you're not auditioning truckloads of people, you can spend a little more time giving the actors a little bit of background, even a tiny bit of direction when they come to read the script. You're not doing their job for them, but you're really saving yourself a lot of work making the audition more comfortable, human, and personal. If you give them a clue as to what you're looking for you might find it that much faster.

Be upfront with the actors. For example, tell them in advance if you're providing makeup and costumes or if they have to provide their own. Definitely tell them whether this is a paying gig or a volunteer operation. Acting is, for many, a part-time occupation. It requires a high level of commitment that not everyone can make for free.

Types of auditions

As an actor or a director you may encounter the following:

- **The cold 'first audition'.** This is where the actor enters and encounters a row of impassive people behind a desk and they're usually asked to give one or two short dramatic monologues. These can be mystifying to the actor, who gets no response from the director, but can be useful to the director in terms of classifying actors in terms of range, physical type, and appropriateness for the role. In preparing for this kind of audition, pick one or two monologues from characters that are essentially close to yourself as a person, then use that character to extend outwards and explore the character's limits, as well as your own. Then go in and knock 'em dead.

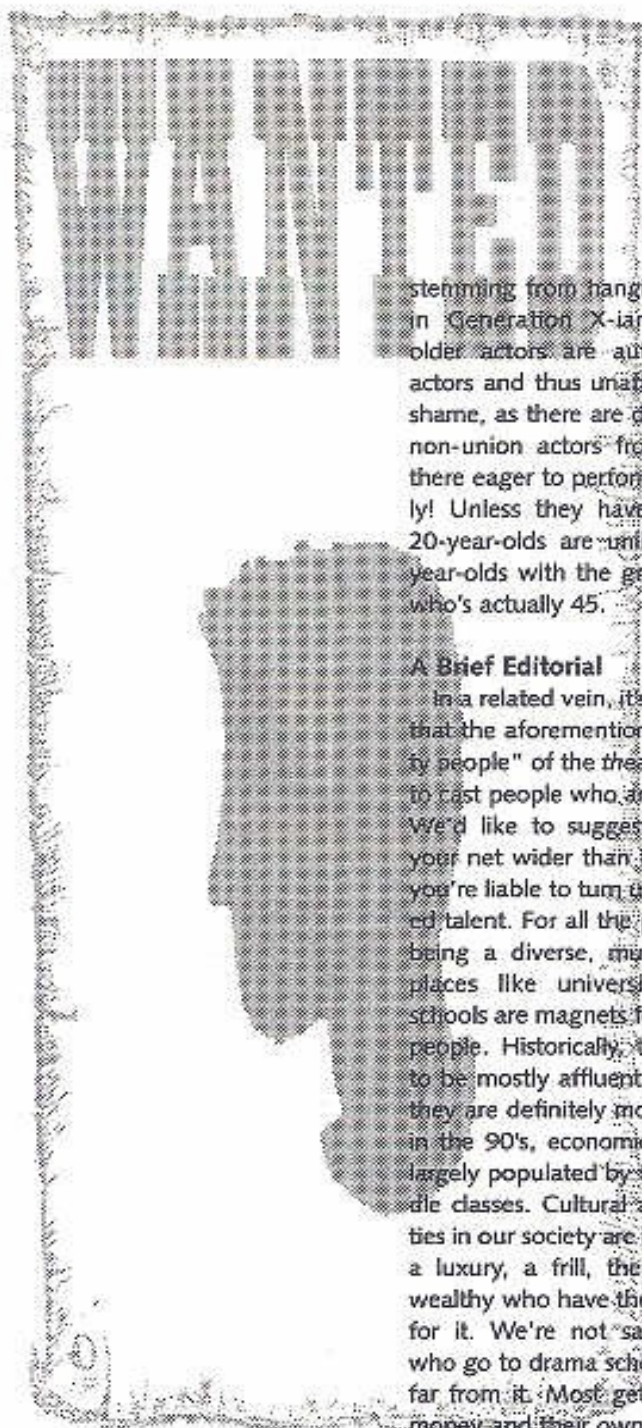
- **The Group Audition.** Sometimes more than one actor are put in together in a kind of workshop atmosphere, which is a little more friendly than a monologue session. You might be asked to read from the script, to improvise based on the character description, or to 'free improvise' with the other actors. This is useful to determine the suitability of one actor over another, or to see how two or more actors work together. Overall this kind of audition should be as comfortable as possible for the actors and you'll get more interaction with the director as to what they'd like to see.

- **The Script Audition.** You may have the script given in advance, or have to read it 'cold'. Overall, this kind of audition is not to try to get the actor to give a polished, stage-ready performance

from the word go. It's more to see how quickly they can get a handle on the character and how much the director likes their interpretation. Actors might want to know that directors are not impressed if you put down the script and recite 'from memory'; you'll be too busy worrying about the lines to give them the right feel. Keep the script in your hand. Use it as a prop, or what have you. The important element to this audition is to show not that you know the lines, but what you can do with them.

- There are plenty of books of monologues available, and you might also want to consider looking up Michael Shurtleff's *Auditions* (Bantam, 1979) a more in-depth practical guide to the process.

One of the pleasures/perils we mentioned in the introduction is the relative youth in the theatre community. This can be a definite problem when casting for a wider age range than, say, university students. Makeup can only do so much! A reality of the acting world is that most young actors, fresh out of drama school, are engaging in amateur or semi-pro productions, and as a result don't get union status. The Catch 22 then occurs: Most amateur and semi-pro productions don't have the budget to afford union wages for cast and crew, and as such rely on enthusiastic, young, non-union people. After a while, the dreaded attrition occurs, people move on, and new young people come in. A dangerous loop forms where, *Logan's Run*-like, nobody over the age of 35 gets to play. This is probably due to the untrue assumption in our young theatre world,



stemming from hanging out too much in Generation X-ian solidarity, that older actors are automatically union actors and thus unaffordable. This is a shame, as there are dozens of capable, non-union actors from 30 to 80 out there eager to perform. Cast realistically! Unless they have brilliant insight, 20-year-olds are unlikely to play 45-year-olds with the gravity of someone who's actually 45.

A Brief Editorial

In a related vein, it's a deplorable fact that the aforementioned "young, pretty people" of the theatre universe tend to cast people who are like themselves. We'd like to suggest that by casting your net wider than the 'usual' places, you're liable to turn up more unexpected talent. For all the pride we place on being a diverse, multicultural society, places like universities and drama schools are magnets for certain kinds of people. Historically, they have tended to be mostly affluent and white; while they are definitely more racially diverse in the 90's, economically they are still largely populated by the upper-to-middle classes. Cultural and artistic activities in our society are largely considered a luxury, a frill, the province of the wealthy who have the time and money for it. We're not saying that people who go to drama school are rich snobs, far from it. Most get in on their own money and their own merit.

What goes unsaid is that talented people *outside* the cozy bubble of money, school and the 'scene' can often feel shut out of theatre, or feel that they have nothing to contribute, or that it's not concerned about them. Sometimes, this lack is addressed by an

issues-based theatre company like the Black Theatre Workshop or Teesri Duniya, but it doesn't eliminate the problem. While we can't change the world, we can change how we perceive the people in it. When casting, consider doing things like going to community centres, youth centres, CEGEPS or high schools and help 'new blood' into the theatre community. We'll all benefit.

Finding Your Technical Crew

The first people to ask are those 'in the know'; those people already involved in theatre. Talk to your theatre friends, ask them for advice and references. You may fill up a majority of personnel slots this way (and helps you get work on other people's productions too). Besides that, you can:

- Place an ad in a newspaper. You will probably get the best response by advertising in the *Mirror* or the *Hour*.
- Put up a notice in a theatre school. Students learn set, costume, sound and lighting design. Like everyone else in theatre, they can't become 'professional' union people until they have a certain amount of experience under their belts. They may be glad to have the opportunity to work, even in a non-paying position.
- As with auditions, put up a notice in areas that theatre people often pass. These include cafés, theatre spaces, the QDF, Playwright's Workshop, rehearsal halls, etc. Be sure to ask permission.
- Contact a union such as IATSE (International Alliance of Theatre and Stage Employees) or CAEA (Canadian Actor's Equity Association). Note that if you do this you will be expected to pay union wages.

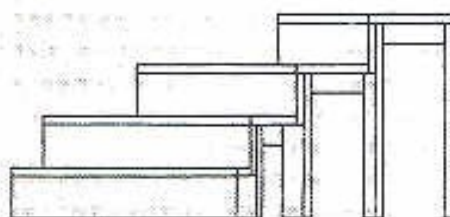
Theatre Spaces

Montreal is currently lacking in affordable good anglophone theatre spaces. There are some well-equipped ones out there, but the rule is, the better equipped or larger the space is, the more expensive it is.

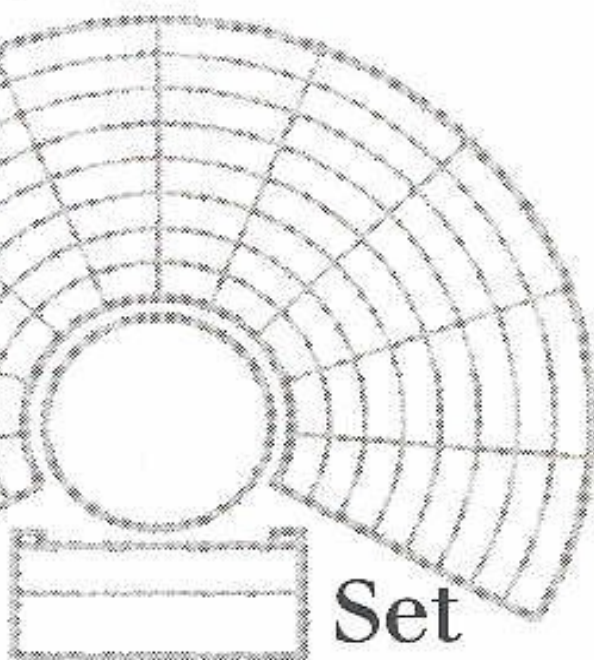
It's common for theatre companies to rent out space in various elementary or high schools. Some of these places are surprisingly well-equipped and affordable. It's usually good to know the Drama or Arts teacher, as sometimes they can get a very good deal for you. If performing in a semi-public institution such as this, be aware and organized beforehand. Arrange a secure place to lock up costumes, equipment and props when not performing.

Many companies also prefer to do theatre on the streets, in the parks, or in other non-traditional settings. The City of Montreal maintains some outdoor stages, such as the one in Parc Lafontaine. In other areas you'll either have to build your own or do without. Check with your municipal authorities before proceeding.

Theatre companies also need rehearsal space. Luckily in Montreal there is no shortage of this. There are plenty of artist's lofts, co-ops, dedicated practice studios (usually for music), and former industrial space available to rent. Check your classifieds and look around.



ELEVATION
CURVED STAIRS



Set Materials

Often when building sets one needs stock items such as risers, platforms, door frames, and staircases. It's a good idea to borrow or rent these if possible. If you're designing and building them from scratch, you might want to consult some good reference books from the theatre section of your local university library.

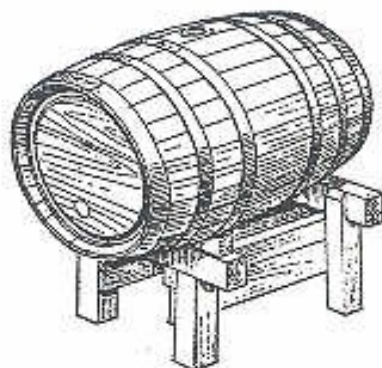
An excellent standard text for all aspects of set-building and other technical theatre work is J. Michael Gillette's *Theatrical Design and Production* (Mayfield Publishing Company, 1987) available at the McGill University bookstore on McTavish Street.

Superstores like Reno-Depot carry paint, lumber, and hardware, all at discount prices. See our complete listing of stores in the Appendix.

Props

Second-hand shops, toy stores, garage sales, church bazaars, the Salvation Army stores and flea markets are good places to look for props. You can also borrow or rent them from other theatre companies or theatre schools. If you are handy with tools, glue, paint and duct tape, you can often improvise anything out of balsa wood, papier-maché, Poly-Filla, wood dowels and Styrofoam. Often, for stage purposes, an item might only be seen from one side or might need only to be decorative. Since the audience isn't going to see them close up, you can often make a lightweight, fake object that gives the impression of being something heavy and 'real'-like using Z-Brick tiles over masonite, or using trompe l'oeil paint techniques to make something look like heavy marble or rock.

Oh yeah—a retractable dagger is a must for *Romeo and Juliet*.



Special Items

You will find that your company is always in need of unusual items. Where does one find a barrel? A bale of hay? Antique guns? Gas masks? How about a trained cat?

Basically the rule of thumb in finding resources is to first use common sense, then your imagination, then ask for advice if you still haven't found anything. For example, you might need a barrel. Common sense suggests that department stores don't sell barrels. Use your imagination. Who has barrels? Farms? Maybe. Go to a farm and ask where they get theirs. Or think harder—distilleries need to age whisky in barrels—call Seagram's! In fact Seagram's was where one company bought a beautiful oak barrel for a production, and it only cost \$15.

It's a good idea to keep a file in the office database of companies that can provide special materials and rare items for future use.

Wood Forms Hardware
Cloth Cloth



Costumes and Make Up

In a typical 'grassroots' Montreal theatre show the cast will be in street clothes appropriate to their character—often secondhand clothes or something they already own. But in staging a period piece; a piece where clothes get intentionally damaged (every night of the show) or anything that requires special clothing, you require COSTUMES!

There are a number of costume shops in Montreal, but renting can be expensive, and the cost of dry cleaning may or may not be included. If you can borrow costumes from another company, great! Just remember to return them in the same condition you got them.

For any 20th century period piece you can often get away with second-hand clothing. There are many used and 'recycled' clothes shops around. Check your grandparents' attic, flea markets, garage sales, the Salvation Army, and other places for inspiration. Often clothes can be modified with tucks, extra collars, trim, buttons, and so on. On a leather jacket, for instance, you can use shoe polish to completely change its color and appearance. Fabric dye is cheap, and if done well can turn a dowdy cloth coat into a vibrant show-piece.

Be aware, however, that once you cut away, fabric can't be replaced. Plan any modifications well in advance.

If you make your own costumes you are in luck. There are lots of stores in Montreal that sell textiles and fabrics cheap: the Chabanel clothing district is a great place to get end-of-season specials, manufacturers' overstock and samples.

Here are some costume shops (most of which also have theatrical makeup):

Aparty Decor Inc. 335-0841

1434 Sauvé West, Montreal

House of Costumes: 526-2847

1460 Ontario Street, Montreal

Le Costumier du Roi: 522-6058

1419 Montcalm, Montreal

Malabar: 845-8169

3454 St. Denis, 2nd floor, Montreal

Mardi Gras Rentals Inc: 685-5550

10417-A Goin W., Roxboro

Johnny Brown: 844-3221

1474 Peel, Montreal

Joseph Ponton Costumes: 849-3238

480 St. Francois-Xavier, Montreal.

Used Clothing/Props

Salvation Army/Armée du Salut

Main Store: 935-7425

1620 Notre Dame West, corner Guy.

Clothing, furniture, appliances and toys

Family Thrift Stores:

Verdun: 767-8454

N.D.G.: 488-8714, 6775 Fielding.
clothing only.

Boutique Eva B.: 849-8246

2013 St-Laurent, corner Ontario:
near Métro St-Laurent.

Used clothes from the 50's to the 90's
stock always changes, good quality and
cheap! They also rent clothing, usually
at Halloween, but ask about it.





Lighting Equipment

If you're lucky your theatre already has lighting equipment, because it's somewhat expensive to rent, and quite expensive to buy.

A professional lighting kit includes the actual lamps themselves, a lighting grid, a dimmer or control console and/or a power source. The *lamps* come in three varieties: the narrow-beam *Spot*, wider *Flood*, and *Fresnel* (pronounced 'frenel') lens which is adjustable between the two. Depending on the size of the venue, you may require lamps of larger or smaller sizes and of various wattages. It's better to over-estimate here than be caught with light that's too-dim. Lamps are usually adjustable for angle and direction, and have a provision for attachments such as *barn-doors*, used to limit the edge of the beam; *cutouts* or *projected backdrops*, which project a silhouette or transparent image such as moon, stars, lightning, clouds, and

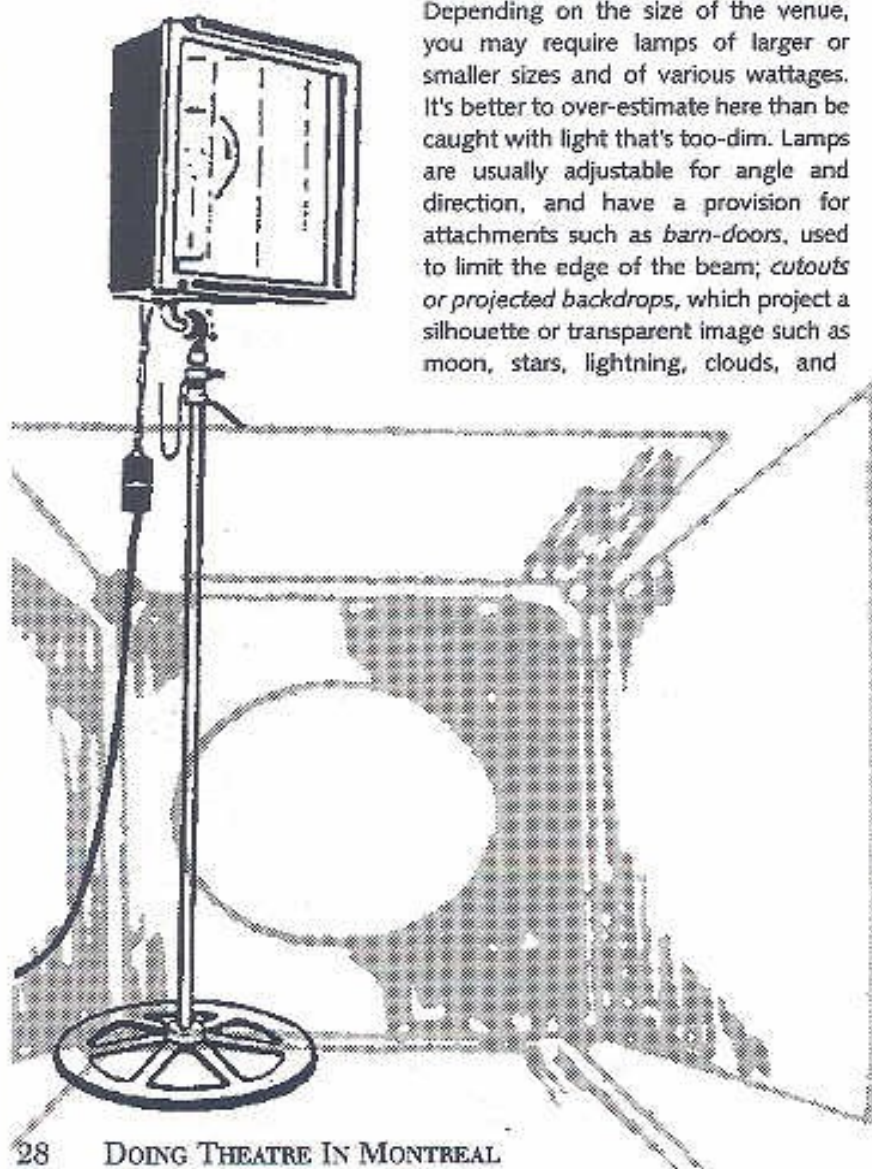
window frames and *gels*, the transparent colored films for tinting the light. These can be hung from a *lighting grid*, which can be either a permanently fixed arrangement of pipes with electrical fittings connected to the house controls, or a temporary grid set upon or near the stage; arranged as floor spots or footlights for special effects; or as freestanding 'manual' following spotlights or fill lights.

The *Dimmer board* is like an audio mixer that allows you to switch individual lights on and off and 'fade' them up and down. Like an audio mixer, it usually has at least eight 'channels'. Many models have 24 or more channels. Depending on how you set it up, a channel can control individual lamps or groups of lights. It usually has its own high-voltage power supply; some models require 220V (professional) power connections.

When using *gels*, it's important to remember that they are little more than plastic film, and while professional gels are fairly sturdy, if the lights are left on too long they *will* melt!

Keep in mind that professional lights use a lot of electricity, so check to make sure your venue has enough outlets (preferably grounded) or has a rated power outlet for pro equipment. Make sure you know where the venue's circuit breakers are, and that you have some way of shutting things off quickly in case of emergency.

Even a moderately complex lighting set-up can become a bewildering mass of cables, outlets, and switches, so when the lighting design is complete, be sure to write a *complete* description of the set-up, including a diagram, to make set-up, breakdown and opera-



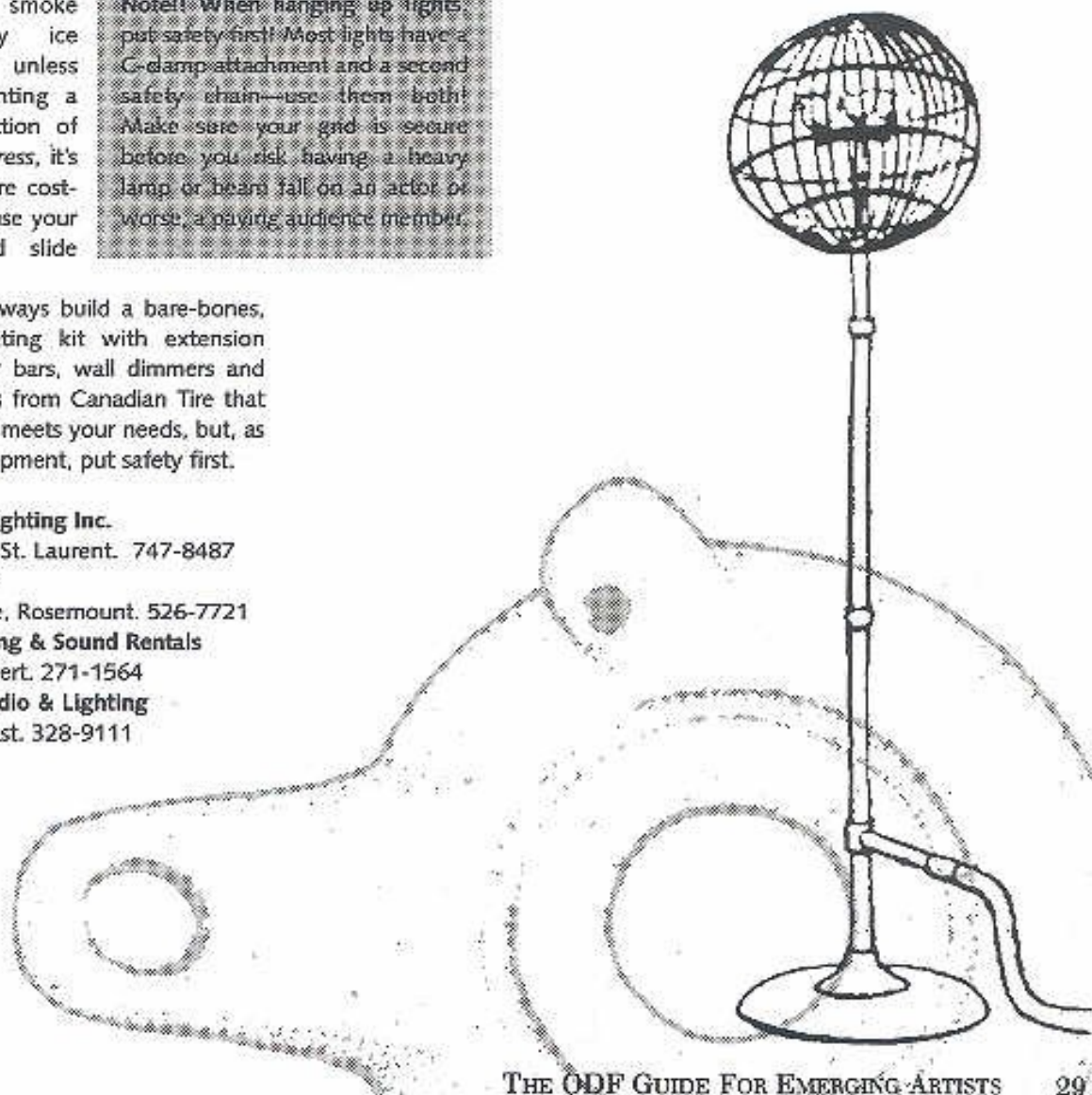
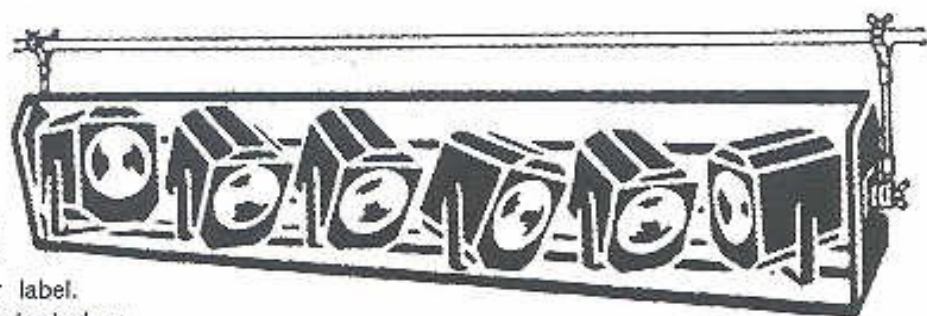
tion simpler. Make sure all cables are tagged at both ends with a number or label. When the grid is complete, try to bundle all power cables together with tape or tie-wraps into a 'snake' to make it as unobtrusive as possible. You *will* go through *dozens* of rolls of duct tape, so buy in bulk!

Even fancier, and more expensive, are special lighting effects such as strobes, lasers, video projectors and smoke machines/dry ice fogs. But unless you're mounting a mega-production of *Starlight Express*, it's probably more cost-effective to use your parents' old slide projector.

You can always build a bare-bones, minimal lighting kit with extension cords, power bars, wall dimmers and colored bulbs from Canadian Tire that will probably meet your needs, but, as with pro equipment, put safety first.

Ivan & Co. Lighting Inc.
837 Décarie, St. Laurent. 747-8487
Solotech Inc.
4820 4th Ave, Rosemount. 526-7721
Kostar Lighting & Sound Rentals
7345 St. Hubert. 271-1564
Pro Show Audio & Lighting
6782 Jarry East. 328-9111

Note!! When hanging up lights, put safety first! Most lights have a G-clamp attachment and a second safety chain—use them both! Make sure your grid is secure before you risk having a heavy lamp or beam fall on an actor or worse, a paying audience member.



Sound Equipment

If the space you are using doesn't have sound equipment, you've got several options. The most basic sound system can be a portable stereo system, useful for simple music and background sound effects. The sound quality will be fair at best, as a small system will distort at high volume and will be at the mercy of the acoustics of the room. Cassette tapes can be a pain to cue up, especially if your play has several music and sound effects cues.

If you find you need more flexibility in sound and/or need to project to a larger hall, consider renting or borrowing a small PA system, typically a small mixer, power amplifier, 3-way speakers (capable of reproducing bass, mids, and highs) two CD players and a double cassette deck. For this kind of system you will probably not need more than a 6 channel mixer. Try to get one that has at least one or two 'XLR' connectors for professional microphones, if needed.

A word about amplifiers: The rating of the power amplifier refers only partly to the volume it will produce, but more to the headroom, or clarity, that it has. A 100 watt amp won't be that much louder than a 50 watt amp, just less prone to distortion. A good formula to follow is about 1.5 watts per audience member for speech, 2 watts for loud music, and 3 to 4 watts for outdoor sound due to dispersion. You can easily cover an indoor audience of 150 people with a 200 to 300 watt PA system, and you probably won't have to turn it up all that loud, either: they are sitting quietly, right?

Audio Tips

• As with Lighting, once the audio system has been set up, write up a

detailed description, with diagrams, of the setup to make it easier to set up and break down. Label individual audio and power cables and, whenever possible, bundle them together with cable ties.

• Unless you enjoy the loud popping sound of blown speakers always remember to turn off your amplifier, or at least to turn down the master volume on your mixer, before turning on, turning off, connecting or disconnecting any equipment.

• Keep audio and power cables separate! One great complaint most beginners have with audio systems is '60Hz hum' or buzzing in the sound system. This is usually due to poorly shielded audio cables picking up electromagnetic interference from nearby power cables and stage lights. To avoid this, always use properly shielded audio cables, and try to keep the cable runs as short as possible. Don't use a 10ft cable for a 2ft connection!

If you suspect an audio cable of being broken or shorting out, test it and if it's irreparably shot, discard it! There's nothing like intermittent buzzing from a \$3 cable to ruin your big show.

Where audio and power cables must cross, try to have them cross at right angles- this minimizes any interference.

When using mics, try to avoid the cheap plastic karaoke variety which usually have molded-on cables that terminate in a 1/4" phone jack. They pick up noise like anything, and aren't very durable either. When buying or renting mics, look for good quality brands like Shure, AKG, Sennheiser and others that use the shielded 'XLR' three-pin connector. Trust me, you'll save yourself a big headache.

If you need sound effects, check out your local theatre or film school's library. Many have extensive, royalty-free sound effects libraries. The most popular library of sounds on CD is the Sound Ideas collection. There are several volumes of sound effects and short segments of music suitable for radio and television production, including the Lucasfilm sound effects collection. Most colleges and universities have Audio-Visual Departments that have the mixing equipment you need. And if you don't have access to pre-recorded effects, get creative! Get a good-quality tape recorder or DAT machine and record your own sounds.

If the players really cannot be heard, it's relatively simple to add microphones to the setup. Mics can be hidden in the set itself, placed close to the footlights, or suspended from the lighting grid.

More complex productions are known to use wireless "bodypack" lavalier mics which are relatively unobtrusive, but more expensive to rent, as each microphone needs a separate frequency and receiver. In recent years they have become an essential part of musical productions where individual voices must be heard clearly.

When working with live musicians, you may need a more extensive PA system, at the very least a mixing board with more channels, and possibly outboard equipment like reverb effects and EQ. Since every system will be different, consult with your musicians and the store where you're renting the equipment from. They will be more than happy to help you find a system just right for your production.

Ivan & Co. Lighting Inc.

837 Décarie, St. Laurent. 747-8487

Steve's Music

51 St. Antoine Street West. 878-2216

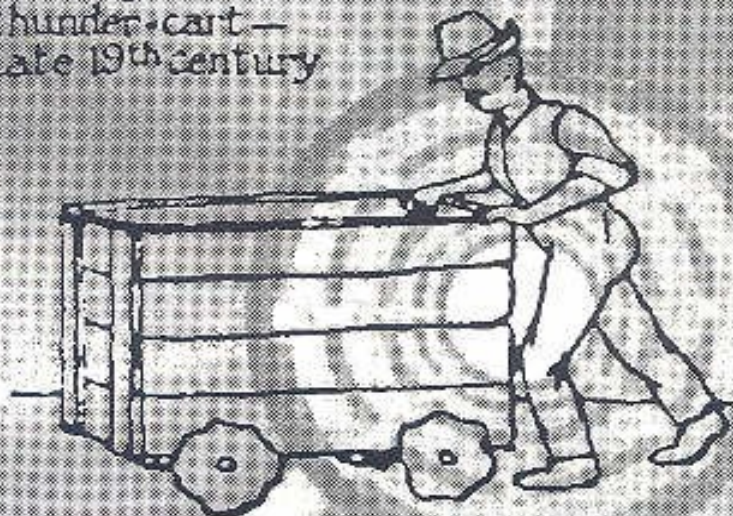
Kostar Lighting & Sound Rentals

7345 St. Hubert. 271-1564

Pro Show Audio & Lighting

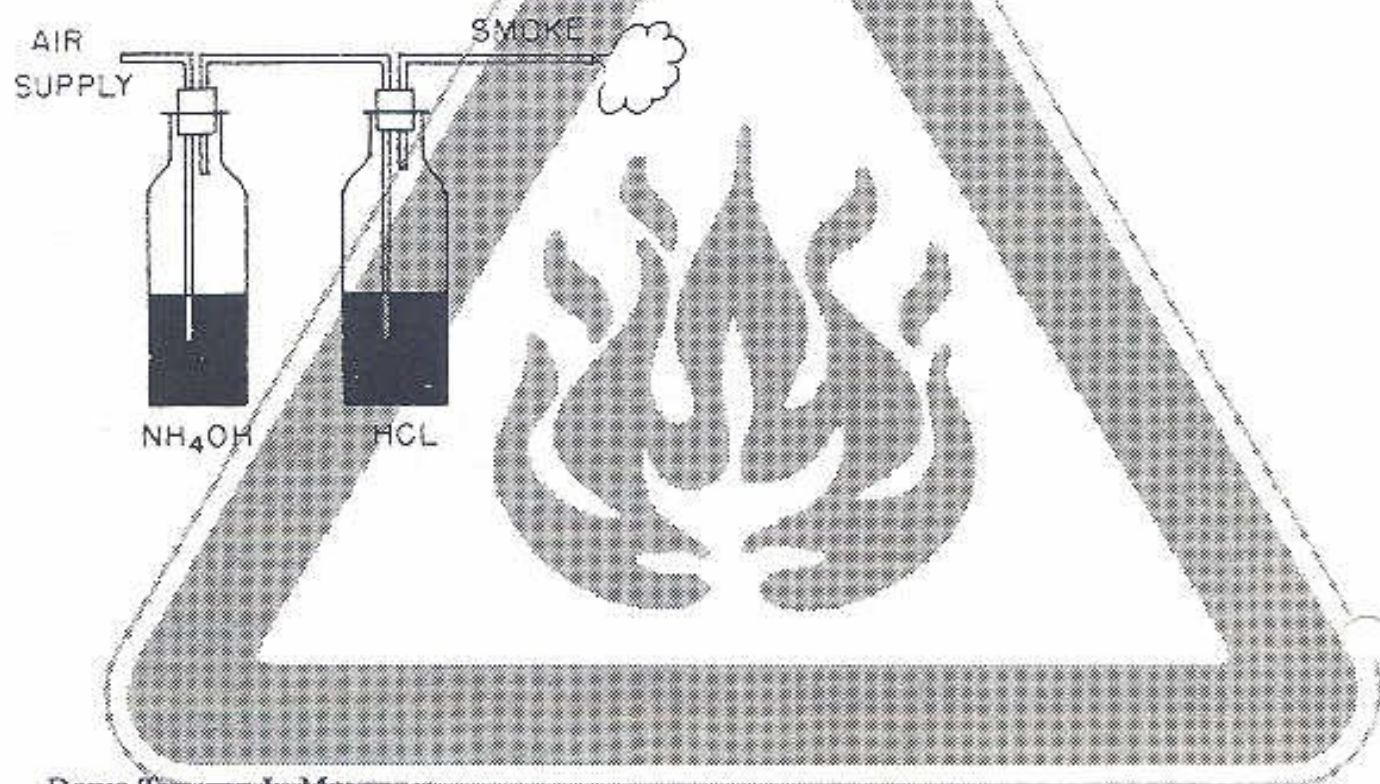
6782 Jarry East. 328-9111

Old English
thunder-cart—
late 19th century



Pyrotechnic Effects

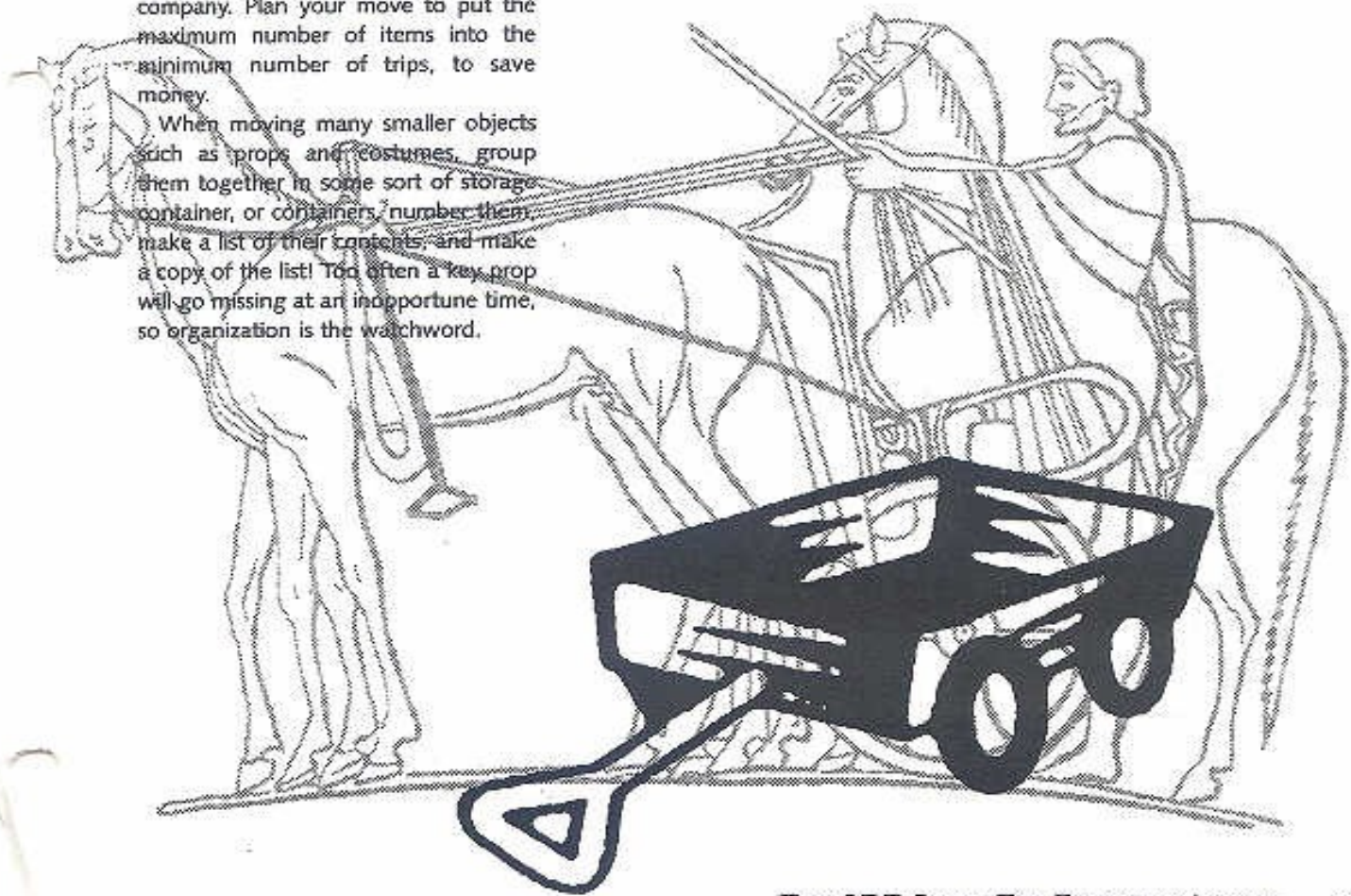
There are specific laws governing the use of pyro effects, because they're potentially very dangerous. Make sure you consult an expert such as someone from the Fire Department, the City of Montreal Permits Office, or the Stunt Persons' Association before using any flash powder, blank shots, explosions, etc. The expert you consult will tell you where to acquire these, how to apply for permits, and how to use them safely and within the boundaries of the law. Note that it's usually the Props or Set department that is in charge of special effects. It's a legal requirement to mention either in the programme or on a sign if strobe lighting, gunshots or similar effects are used, as the first can bring about epileptic seizures and the second can be dangerously frightening to some people.



Transportation

Often you might need a truck to transport sets and other equipment to a theatre. The classifieds are full of ads for 'Man With A Van' operations willing to do small moves for under \$100; some others charge by the hour, or the distance. If you are constructing a set to be taken down and put up again repeatedly, as in a touring show, try to design it to fold together and fit into the confines of a Ford Econoline stretch van, the most common one you'll encounter. If you do it yourself, but only have a car, rent a trailer from U-Haul. If you're moving a lot of larger items such as furniture, consider renting a panel van from Ryder or a similar company. Plan your move to put the maximum number of items into the minimum number of trips, to save money.

When moving many smaller objects such as props and costumes, group them together in some sort of storage container, or containers, number them, make a list of their contents, and make a copy of the list! Too often a key prop will go missing at an inopportune time, so organization is the watchword.





Getting Advice

If you've no clue about how to solve a problem, you'll need advice. If your problem is regarding finance, especially grants, contact the QDF. They have shelves of files that can help as well as an incredible database. The QDF is generally helpful if you are a member - it's their purpose to serve you.

If you need help with something beyond the scope of the QDF, use your head to find either a book or an expert that can help: have a look in this guide and the Appendix for names and addresses.

Always remember that if an expert gives you advice they are doing you a tremendous favour, so make it as painless as possible for them and, just maybe, they'll help you again in the future. When asking for advice always be organized with the questions you need answered. Be polite and accommodating, and do not disturb the experts when they are busy. It's a kind gesture to send a personal thank-you note and a name-check in your play's programme. Put their name into your database; their expertise may be invaluable to your company in the future.

Remember, it's a good idea to give advice when it's asked of you, or refer people to where they can find it. What goes around generally comes around.

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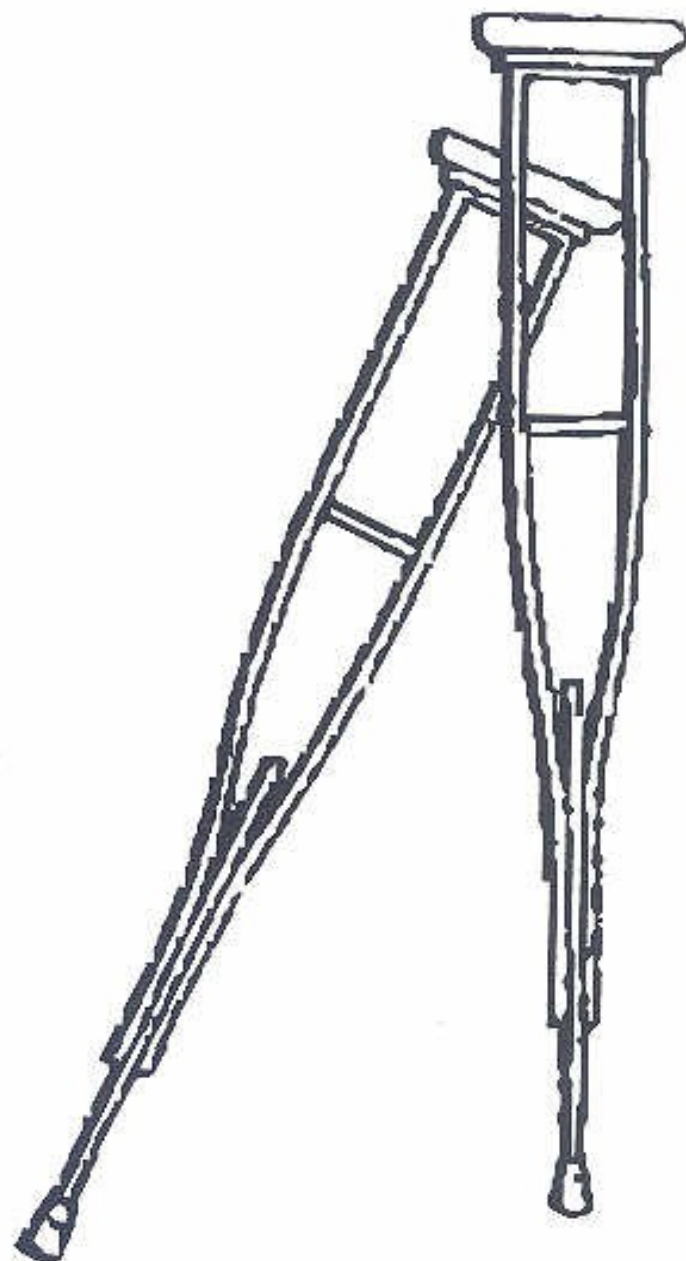
Support

Afterword

We hope this information helped you with your production. We are hope to update the guide every now and then, and produce an updated listings Appendix every year. We welcome your suggestions, commentaries, and contributions for the next edition.

It was a pleasure writing the guide, and we hope it helps all those who want an English-language theatre scene that is vibrant, diverse, energetic, and self-supporting, providing quality theatre to audiences for years to come.

Break a leg!



To whom it may concern,

In 1994, a young art administration student showed up at my door step, put a diskette on my desk and said: "Here's a document I prepared for school, that could help young theatre producers be more efficient at what they do; I want to give it to QDF so that members can benefit from it".

Like he mentioned in his introduction, Donovan King had prepared a production manual mainly because of his own frustrations as an emerging producer before he returned to school. A charity that promotes theatre development, QDF could not close its eyes to a highly self-motivated young man, who is willing to generously plant the seeds of growth and share the fruits. I felt I had no choice but to keep in sight Donovan's goal and make his work available to as many struggling artists as possible. Some editing, two years, and countless volunteer-hours later, *Doing Theatre In Montreal: A Guide For Emerging Artists* was launched and Donovan's gesture was most significant in this venture. Like the saying goes, there are no small roles.

I know Donovan's strong commitment to progress and productivity and see his interest in your activities as one further demonstration of that commitment. It is with pleasure that I present this letter of reference for Donovan. I am convinced that, like myself, you will appreciate Donovan's dedication and entrepreneurship.

Sincerely,



Léo Beaulieu
 Executive Director